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224 they must be loose enough to fall on any animal driven into them by the beaters and entangle it. Some twenty paces behind the nets the Marias make little shelters of leaves, about fifteen yards apart, carefully camouflaged from the front, and in these shelters groups of four or five spearmen stand motionless. They do not move till an animal is clearly entangled in the net, but then there is a rush of men to have the honour of the first spear. The first man stabs and holds the animal down with his spear, while the others blood their spears. He gets as his portion the off hind leg from buttock to hough, the headman gets the saddle, and the *waddai* or clan-priest the liver, the portion usually given to the Departed. At Koilibera I saw deer, four-horned antelope and a panther netted in this way and duly dispatched. On the last day a tiger, shot at but missed twice from the *machans* in front, hurled itself at full gallop into the net twenty yards to the right front of the shelter where I was standing with a group of spearmen. It fell headlong, and the net fell on to it according to rule; but unfortunately at that point the rope meshes were old and brittle, and the ground rocky and grassless; the tiger's weight and speed smashed the retaining rope and burst a hole through the net. There was a brief vision of a mighty forearm sweeping aside the encumbrance, and the tiger was free; he rushed roaring by the side of the next clump of spearmen, so close that they could have touched him. Wisely all stood stock still from the moment when the tiger entered the net till it had passed them; but then one of the guns from a back *machan* not so wisely fired over the heads of the line of spearmen. Whether he hit the tiger or not, he enraged it, and it swung round to charge. Those of us on the ground with rifles could not fire at first because the tiger was not clear of the line of spearmen; but a rain of rather wild bullets, one of which broke the tiger's near forearm, checked him, and Kalmu Boda gave it the *coup de grâce* (possibly saving more than one life) by hitting it in the neck with a contractile bullet fired from an ancient twelve-bore gun, rusty and unoiled, with barrels patched with rough iron bands and held together with wire, and as loose in the breech and stock as a gun could be. The bullet killed the tiger outright. Boda had missed twice and misfired once before the final shot. The Murias and Marias present drummed the tiger back to camp with their usual anapaestic rhythm, and the Marias broke into a dance, advancing and retreating before the dead tiger to the same anapaestic drumbeats.

The Bison-horn Maria is an adept at nets and snares of all kinds and sizes for all manner of game. Kalmu Boda has recipes for poisoning tiger and other game. For poisoning arrows they use occasionally the crushed seeds of the *Abrus precatorius* shrub;

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the seeds are small, shiny and scarlet, with black eyes, and are used as beads in Bastar and many parts of the Central Provinces. For poisoning tiger they 'salt' the flesh of a kill with the poisonous leaves, bark and roots of the shrub *dual bito* (Halbi *bag mohra*; *Alstonia neriifolia*) mixed with quicklime.

C. *Domestication of Animals*

Pigs

Pork is a major item in the dietary of Hill and Bison-horn Marias. At the end of marches in the Abujhmar hills I always paid for a pig for the carriers from the preceding camp to roast and eat before dispersing to their villages; and it is sound to provide the Marias or Murias called out for any State work with pork at the beginning and end of the work. The best fattened hog[1] is very cheap and goes a long way. The housing and feeding of pigs have already been described[2]; cared for in this way, even the domestic India pig is not necessarily the foul worm-ridden pest that he becomes in the low caste quarters of the towns and villages of British India, and in fact in Abujhmar villages his quarters are often cleaner than the houses.

Nearly all young boars are gelded, but a few are left entire for sacrifices in honour of the clan-god and the Village Mother to whom neither Hill nor Bison-horn Maria would offer a hog. The Hill Maria lays the boar on its back, ties its front legs to a post, and stretches out its back legs, while another draws out its penis (*dim*) and crushes its testicles (*merrskeng*) with stones. They say that gelding improves the flavour of pork, and the only boars ever eaten are those sacrificed. A hog is always part of the Hill Maria bride-price. Hill Marias call a hog *badiali padi* or *kuna padi*, and Bison-horn *badiali padi*; boars they respectively call *charhal padi* and *kural padi*.

Cooked pig's lard is kept in many Hill Maria houses as a salve for sore eyes and cuts.

Poultry

They keep numbers of poultry similar in breed and appearance to the red jungle fowl. The Hill Maria's hen-coops have been described on page 104. Cocks and hens are taken to the field houses, and roost there below the sleeping platforms. *Korr-guda*, funnel-shaped nests on bamboo posts about two feet high, are kept in every Hill Maria house, and by many Bison-horn Marias. Jungle cock visit the *penda* plots and fight the domestic cocks in the early morning; the Hill Marias say that if a jungle cock crosses a domestic hen the eggs are not fertile.

[1] 'Hog' is used in its technical sense, of a gelded boar.
[2] See pp. 103 and 120.

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with which the second line dealt with these fish, some of which weighed from ten to fifteen pounds, and required all the handling that the men were capable of; even then many were dropped from sheer weight. In all, more than 300 fish, of all sizes, were caught in the day, enough to provide ample food for a week for everyone present. The Marias were delighted.'

For poisoning fish all or some of the following[1] are used:— *korkoti* (3, 5) leaves and twigs; fruit of the *masiya* (1), *kirach* (1) (*Cassaria graveolens*), *kothewa* (1), *pendra* (1) (*Randia uliginosa*), *kotma* (3), *iriya* (5), *wasa* (5) or *vachcha* (5), and *kue* (6) (*Randia dumetorum*); roots of the *sirindi* (1, 2), *agya* (1, 3, 4) (*Milletia auriculata*), *korti* (1), *timra* (1, 2) (root-bark), *hewu* (5) (pounded with earth from a white-ant hill), *kumbhi* (1, 5) (root-bark; *Careya arborea*), *tumsi* (5), *basemati* (6), and *batte* (6); bark of the *karra* (1, 3, 6) or *karla*, *kirangi* (4), *kuchali* (5) (*Strychnos nux vomica*) and *muchi-tumri*[2] (5) (*Diospyros montana*), *kodra-marra* (6) and *chil*[3] (6); and the ground oil-cake (1, 5, 6) made from *tora*, the seeds of the *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*).

The ingredients are pounded together with stones or axe-heads on a rock in or near the pool or tank; if the water is deep, they are thrown into it the night before the fish are collected; if it is shallow, the poisons act in an hour or two and can safely be thrown into the water in the morning. The fish are stupefied by them, and are easily collected floating on the surface.

In the Kolab-Sabari in Sukma zamindari and Konta tahsil, Bison-horn Marias and others have night beats for fish in the hot weather; they call the beats '*chingra parad*' and '*kola parad*'. The late Circle Inspector Chaitan Singh gave the following description of these:—

'The beat must be held on a dark moonless night, and not in a tank or a small nullah or in water flowing over mud which would be stirred up by the feet of the beaters, but in clear shallow water flowing over sand or shingle, not more than thigh-deep. Four or five men enter the water carrying each a bamboo torch, and a basket; the torch is held not more than a foot above

[1] The numbers 1 to 6 stand for lists of poisons supplied from 1, Jagdalpur; 2, Sukma; 3, Kondagaon; 4, Dantewara; 5, Konta; and 6, Bijapur. There is almost certainly some duplication owing to the different names prevailing in different parts of Bastar for the same plants. Bastar plant names so differ from those in the Central Provinces that identification is difficult without sending actual specimens to Dehra Dun. The Central Provinces forest lists give as known fish poisons roots of *Milletia auriculata*, fruit of *Cassaria graveolens*, *Cassaria tomentosa* and *Randia dumetorum*, bark of *Ongeinia dalbergioides*, and leaves and bark of *Cleistanthus collinus*. *Strychnos nux vomica* and *Diospyros montana* are well known as poisonous plants.

[2] *Muchi-tumri* is possibly the same as *timra* in lists 1 and 2.

[3] *Chil*, which occurs only in the Bijapur list, may be the Telugu word *chil* for *Strychnos potatorum*, the clearing nut. The seeds of this are used for clearing muddy water.

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The children, as well as older people, kill and eat frogs when they can. In the rains they creep up to any small pond and with their sticks kill the frogs before they are able to escape into the water. They remove the skin and stomach and roast the rest. Many people, however, only eat the hind legs, regarding the rest as dangerous. Frog's flesh is believed to be a useful remedy for swollen glands.[1] Various kinds of lizards are eaten the same way. In most of the less sophisticated villages red ants are valued both for food and as a febrifuge. A party of chelik go through the forest until they see the ants' nests high up in the branches of a tree. Then one of them climbs up and breaks off or cuts all the branches on which the nests are and throws them to the ground. The others quickly prepare leaf-cups and one of them plunges his hands into the nests and fills the cups with the ants and their eggs. They brush off the eggs and tie up the ants in the cups. They bring the little bundles home and put them straight into the fire. When they have been roasted for some minutes they remove the cups, open them and squeeze the ants into a paste. They add salt and chilli and put the mixture back into the fire to bake. This chutney, which is very tasty, with a sharp clean taste, is generally eaten with liquor. At the beginning of the rains the Muria also catch the flying white ants, pull off their wings and fry the bodies.[2]

Other delicacies are the grubs which are found in the date-palm. These large white grubs are sought after by many others beside the Muria, and are bought even by high-caste Hindus in the bazaars for as much as two pice apiece. They are fried and eaten and sometimes oil is extracted from them.

The Muria also enjoy catching and eating the river crab, 'the blacksmith that takes his pincers and hammer about with him', 'the Raja who has hands and feet but lacks a head'.[3] Shrimps and prawns are common in the streams; a prawn is described as 'the boy with eight feet, twelve shoulders and sixteen horns'.

Most of these delicacies, fried with a little chilli, are used as 'savouries' when the people go to drink salphi juice or other liquor. Men and boys going in the evening towards the sago-palms may be seen carrying little leaf-bundles containing fried frogs, grubs and a chutney of red ants. These relieve the sweetness of the salphi juice and the unpleasant taste of the mahua spirit.

Beef is still eaten in all parts of Bastar, even by the sophisticated Raja Muria who are so loud in their protests that they have abandoned it. An interesting story connects the practice with the *dohada* cravings of pregnancy. The Muria theory, which is the old Hindu theory, is that it is the child in the womb who is responsible for the mother's irrational desires. 'A Brahmin woman six months pregnant had a craving for beef and went to a Ganda to get some. For fear of the husband he refused, but his wife gave her two

[1] Crooke has an interesting note on frog-eating. The Musahar of Mirzapur, he says, eat two kinds, a small and a large, at marriages. 'The Burmese certainly eat them and boiled frogs are said to be exposed for sale in their bazaars. I hear that the Burmese prisoners in the Benares jail have been caught eating them alive. Mr Bower tells me that he knows of Saises in Oudh fattening frogs for food in earthen jars.'—*N.I. Notes and Queries*, Vol. II, p. 78.

[2] In South India ants are believed to be a tonic; there is a Tamil proverb that 'If you eat a thousand ants, you will get the strength of an elephant'. A paste made with ants is recorded as being used with curry in Kanara. Winged termites are widely eaten, and sometimes their bodies are sun-dried and stored. The queen termite is considered a special delicacy, fried or raw; Tamil athletes are said to keep themselves in trim by swallowing it raw and then sprinting a couple of miles. See S. T. Moses, 'Ants and Folk-Beliefs in South India', *Man in India*, Vol. VIII, pp. 106.

[3] The viscous substance adhering to the carapace of a crab is believed to be good for ear-ache.

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There are uncle-nephew sambhar grazing there.' 539
When the Raja saw them the deer ran to the hill. 223
He flew the hawk to catch them.
But the hawk did not catch the sambhar and flew away.
Milo milo called the Raja, but its pubic hairs took no heed.
The Raja went home weeping and told his elder brother's wife
That his hawk had flown away.

'Give me food quickly, I will go to find it.'
The girl gave food, the Raja ate it quickly.
He slung his basket on his back and went to find his hawk.
He went calling *Milo milo*, but he found no trace.
The Raja wandered on from land to land.
He came to the realm of Jihgunji Raja,
And called *Milo milo*, but still there was no sign.

The daughters of Ispural were living there.
In their house they hid the hawk; they said, 'We have no news of it'.
The Raja said, 'Where is my hawk? I will give you a reward'.
'We know nothing of your hawk and we want no reward.
Let us go to play, brother, in the sea of sixteen streams.
Then we will tell you of your hawk, and then you will find it.'

They went to bathe in the sea and having bathed, returned.
'Choose now which of us you will take away.'
'I will take the youngest, Phulsundri Rani.'
Quickly they finished the marriage, and gave him back his hawk.
He took his hawk and Rani and brought them home with him.
His elder brother's wife came to greet him with a pot of water.
She greeted him with Johar, and thus they lived and ate.

X. Fishing

The Muria are not professional fishermen, a duty which normally falls upon the Kurmk or Dhimar, but whenever they live near a river they naturally make every effort to supplement their diet, and everywhere they catch the small fish that live in tanks and flooded fields. 226

They do not know a great deal about fish, and apart from saying generally that lightning is caused by the flashing of the scales of a great fish that leaps into the air and the legends they tell about the bod fish, which is the totem of several clans, they have little folklore about them. They distinguish a dozen types of fish, among them the *bodmin*, *sipa*, *dandai* or *kavangra*, *nāri* (or *bāmi*), *bele* (or *khoksi*), *dundum*, *luwe* (or *turu*) and *bāgum*. 825 821 614

The gall-bladder of the *bāgum* is regarded as an important remedy for snake-bite, a belief which is shared even by educated Hindus and members of the State Medical Service. The Muria extract the gall-bladder and preserve it by filling it with the small kosra grain. They keep this carefully and when it is needed, the grain, which has been thoroughly soaked in the bladder secretions, is removed and put in water. When it is dissolved it is given to the patient to drink. 278 ●

The Muria fishing apparatus is of the usual type. They sometimes use a hook and line suspended from a bamboo rod; the hook is baited with flies and 227 226

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times be of very great length. In Kuntpadar there were two measuring over 21 feet long.

The *dhir* is an elaborate and beautifully constructed trap, from four to eight feet long and one and a half feet high. The bamboo slats are very fine and set close together. Entrance to the trap is by a series of small doors with spiral staircases going inwards and upwards with bamboo points facing in to prevent egress. When the fish have entered—and the *dhir* is only used for the smallest creatures—they are shaken out of a small hole at the top left-hand corner. In a riddle this trap is described, '*Netānch horinta murwus tagat ke peshinta*: It goes in behind and comes out through the roof', or 'It eats with four mouths and relieves through the fifth'.

A special arrow with a detachable head is sometimes used (Fig. 12). The arrow-head after sticking in the fish is pulled out of its socket but remains attached to the shaft by a cord. The shaft remains as a float, and is easily recovered.

Ceremonial beats for fish are held before the eating of the new mangoes. The chelik gather poisonous leaves and roots from the forest and throw them into the water. The fish are stupefied and float to the surface and are then easily collected. They are distributed among the villagers, who eat them with the new mangoes.

Many different roots and leaves are used as fish-poison. At Phunder they gave us the names of the fruit of the mode tree, the khuni plant and kurra bark. These three are powdered, mixed together and thrown into the water. Women are not supposed to go into the water when this is done.

Before fishing the Muria invoke the Yer Kanyang (Water Maiden), asking for success and promising a token present. When the first fish is caught they say, 'Whatever ill may be, from widow, witch, from squint or evil eye, be on you'. They spit on it and throw it back into the water. If there is a very successful catch, they may sacrifice a goat or pig on the bank of the river in honour of the Water Maiden.

XI. Liquor

To the Muria liquor-drinking is both a duty and a pleasure. Mahua spirit is a duty because it must be offered to the gods at every festival, at the naming of a child, at a marriage, at a funeral. But the juice of the sago-palm, and even landa rice-beer (where that is taken), is only for pleasure. I will consider duty first.

The mahua tree is a source of food and oil as well as of liquor, and for this reason is greatly honoured. The tree, says Dalton, 'is held sacred by the Gonds, and truly no product of nature has greater claims on their gratitude'.[1] The Muria place a branch of the tree in the centre of the marriage booth; they lay the dead to rest beneath its shade; it is taboo to cut it in a clearing for shifting cultivation; as a source of alcoholic refreshment it was discovered by Lingo himself. Like the Gond and Baiga, the Muria are bound to offer it on every ceremonial occasion; the clan-god demands it, the Village Mother can never have enough, there is no better means of keeping the Departed content and quiet.[2]

In the ghotul, a donation of mahua spirit must be brought by a young boy aspiring to chelikhood; its consumption is a necessary feature of an election

[1] R. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 281.
[2] The Koya put a mahua leaf in the hand of a new-born child.—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 52.

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To divine by chickens, the Gunia brings a chicken to the piles of rice and tries to make it eat, asking it questions all the time. The point where the chicken eats is, of course, the answer to the question.

In matters of great moment and urgency, the Anga Deo from Bara Dongar may be sent for, but this is expensive and wastes a lot of time.

When a diagnosis has been made, steps must be taken to avert the evil. There are many different methods. The most common is the sacrifice of animals, rice, spices and smaller offerings. The village may be protected with bits of iron slag hammered into the doors of houses or round the borders. A scapegoat may be consecrated and driven away into the jungle. If a witch or warlock is discovered, he may be persuaded to undo the damage done. If the cause of disaster is some buried image or bone, it is essential that it should be found and properly destroyed. Often what is called in Hindi a *thua* is performed.

A *thua* is a ceremonial act based on the principles of contagious magic. It aims at concentrating the disease or danger in some material object which it then removes beyond the sphere within which a person can be affected: it takes the evil, for example, outside the village boundary, beyond the patient's *bhum*. Thus the Gunia may get a flea or a pubic hair from the patient, concentrate the disease in it and carry it away. Or to cure fever the Gunia takes one leaf-cup of cold and one of hot water and seven different kinds of flowers. He waves these seven times in front of the patient and throws them away.

A form of treatment recorded in Masora sounds like a combination of suggestion and prayer. To cure a headache on one side of the head, the patient should find a tree with cross-branches, go there on a Sunday, offer rice and pulse to the tree and bang his head seven times against it saying, 'O Mahapurub, be my friend today and drive away my pain'.

Medicines may be used, either alone or in association with magical means. Some of the medicines are probably magical in origin, gaining their power from some fancied resemblance to the thing to be cured, such as the prescription of the white milky sap of certain plants to promote lactation. I have recorded the following prescriptions:

For epilepsy. Take the feathers, and in some cases the flesh and bones, of a sparrow and offer them to whatever Rau or ghost is believed to be causing the trouble. At the time of an actual seizure, water in which the feathers have been dipped should be given to the sufferer.

For round-worms. The horn of a bison is scraped with a knife and the scrapings put in water which is allowed to stand for a time. When the water is drunk it is believed that the worms are either vomited or thrown out in the stool.

For impotence. The genitalia of a bear are universally believed to be a cure for impotence, and Hindu subordinates and others try to obtain these from the Muria, who do not generally require them themselves. Another cure is to drink the powdered roots of the *tej-rāl* and *bhoj-rāl* plants in milk and abstain from intercourse for a week.

For dropsy. This is usually regarded as a sign of the divine displeasure and is a punishment for adultery. It can be cured by the appropriate ceremonies described elsewhere. But the liver of a bear is also useful, if it is found that the disease is due to natural causes.

For venereal disease. This is almost unknown among the Muria. They sometimes confuse gonorrhoea with the burning urine caused by the heat of

summer or the work of burning *dahi*, saying, 'O the summer has brought this burning for me'. They eat onions as a cure. 757

For pain in the stomach. The root of the arandi shrub, or the small green shoots of the bahera tree. 755

For wounds. The bark of the mendla tree. 278

For rheumatism. There are several different remedies:

(1) Put some leaves of the kumi tree on the affected place and blow the pain away.

(2) Powder the roots of the karanji and sarpho plants. Mix with oil and rub it in.

(3) Touch the painful swelling with a bit of 'seed-iron' (*bij-loha*), or a thunderbolt.

For fever. The classic treatment is with red ants, which are sprinkled over the patient's body—the stings act as a counter-irritant. Sometimes, however, the ants are put in a pot of water, the lid is closed and the water is boiled for an hour. Then it is strained out and salt, chilli and garlic are mixed in it and it is given to the patient to drink. The residue of red ants is cleaned, ground up with salt and chilli and made into a chutney and given to the patient with his first food.

Another common febrifuge is to pound the leaves of the chill tree, and make a drink by mixing them with salt and chilli in water.

Red ants are also given as a cure for biliousness. A chutney of red ants, haldi and chilli is said to act very quickly on the stomach.

For headache.

(1) Pull each of your toes in turn. When you have found the toe that is connected with whatever part of the head is aching, tie it up and the pain will cease.

(2) Grind up the roots of makar and tikur with fresh haldi. Make a hot poultice of this and apply it to the head.

For diarrhoea. Take seven grains of rice and seven grains of urad pulse and the dry leaf of any old bamboo in the house. Grind them up together, boil in water, strain and take on an empty stomach.

For itch. Make an ointment of the white underskin of a snake and karanji oil.

For sores.

(1) Collect some harra fruit (myrabolams), dry and grind them to powder. Make a paste with a little oil, and apply to the sores.

(2) Remove the dirt from the patient's own ears, mix it in a paste of rice-flour and apply to the sores.

For the bite of a mad dog. Get a bit of the flesh of a mad dog which has died, dry it carefully and store it. When needed, it may be given mixed with gur not less than two years old.

Several different kinds of medicinal oil are made by the Muria. For cracked feet, and wounds in the ears of a bullock, they extract oil from the *dhaman* snake or the cobra. The fat is removed and melted in a pot and kept carefully in a small gourd. For rheumatism, oil made from the fatty parts of the tiger, the leopard or the bear is said to be effective.

X. Muria Festivals

Muria festivals are of several different kinds. The great Marhai are commercial festivals; in the larger Hindu-ised villages the old Pen Karsita or 'Sport of the Gods' has been turned into a large bazaar, at which the religious element 527

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the lightning is the flash from his anvil. The thunderbolt is the hot slag he throws away.[1]

In Badgai the Muria said that the lightning was the Yer Kanyang (Water Maiden) playing in the sky. As she laughs, her teeth flash. When she laughs in the north, then comes the rain.

Lightning is useful to the world. Lightning warns us of rain and even brings the rain. When it strikes a plant or a tree the Muria collect the bark and burn it in their houses as a remedy against bugs and lice. The bark of a tree struck by lightning is a valuable medicine in cases of delayed delivery.

Thunder is even more useful. It is caused either by the noise of the heavenly smithy or by Lingo or Bhimul dragging their water-skins across the sky. At Aturgaon the Muria said that thunder is the noise made when Mahapurub sits on one of the bullocks made by potters at the Pola festival and rides on it across the sky. In Dongrigura they said that 'Mahapurub goes out to work in his fields or to fetch wood. He sees a storm coming and jumps into his cart and drives hard for home. The rumble of the wheels is the thunder.[2] Mahapurub's iron axe or sickle falls down to the earth with a great crash. If people can find it, it is an invaluable cure for rheumatism or headache.' In Kokori the Muria added the detail that Mahapurub's cart is dragged by sterile women. There is generally the idea that thunder has a beneficial effect on sterility.

For the Muria call the thunderbolt, 'the seed'. In Palari they said, 'Thunder is very useful, it means that the heavenly semen is falling to earth; all the small sprouts of rice and the small vegetables on which this seed falls become pregnant and so bear good fruit.' In Karanji also the Muria said that rice, vegetables and trees only bear fruit after hearing thunder. If there is no thunder the crop is always poor. 'We know this must be so, for it is the same with hens. The hen must hear the cock crow, otherwise its eggs will not be fertile.' It is said that if a thunderbolt falls or lightning strikes the earth near a barren woman, she will soon become pregnant.

Here is another account, from Kokori. 'Bhimul is man; Earth is woman. When Bhimul is on heat, he tries to approach Earth. But there is no road or path, and he rushes about trying to find the way, he hurls rocks and mountains to and fro—and this makes the thunder. At last he can contain his seed no longer: it spurts out—and a thunderbolt falls. From this seed man gets his food. Unless Bhimul gets on heat there is no rain or harvest.'

Rain is described as the chaprasi of Mahapurub who goes ahead of him when he sets out on tour. The rainbow is Lingo's *agindan*, or magic arrow of fire. The rain-giver is either Lingo or Bhimul. The people of the north-west generally beg rain from Lingo, for it is here that Lingo's cult is strongest. In the east they approach Bhimul. In Chikhli village at a time of drought in 1941, the Muria went to Lingo and offered him a bull, but he only gave them three days' rain. When they asked him why this was he said, 'In the old days the Raja himself honoured me with sacrifice, but now I am forgotten and so I am not giving rain'. In Markabera they had the curious notion that the first rain is the marriage of Mother Earth and the frogs come to make music for it. Frogs fall from the sky: if they fall into the water they remain frogs; if they fall into a field they turn into tortoises; if they fall under ebony trees they turn into hares.

[1] In Bastar the Hindus say that during a thunderstorm the *titi* bird lies on its back with its feet in the air in order to protect the earth. Many Muria say the same.

[2] This is a common Hindu notion. Thunder is the voice of Indra, or the roar of the wheels of Bhagavan's chariot. See Enthoven, op. cit., p. 76.

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must not have intercourse with their 'wives' more than once or twice a week. They sleep together daily, but the ghotul leaders do not permit sexual congress; in such a close-knit society, control is not difficult. It is interesting that the natural sequence of a 'scandal' is the adoption of a rule that the motiari must not stay in the ghotul all night, or that they may only remain there before festivals and marriages, or on certain days of the week. This indicates the Muria belief that by breaking up the cycle of intercourse, conception is less likely to occur.

The Muria believe strongly that conception cannot follow an act of casual intercourse. A woman must remain with the same partner for at least a month, and during this time congress must be frequent.[1]

Coitus interruptus is known, but I have recorded it as practised in only two ghotul, Binjhli and Padde. I would not ordinarily pay much attention to the negative evidence in such a case, but in this matter inquiries have been made widely and with great care. There does not seem to be any reason why people who are prepared to discuss freely the most intimate sexual matters, even those that are taboo, should deny the method unless it really did not exist. In the majority of ghotul, it had not even been heard of, and a description of it was greeted with astonishment and even mirth. 'How should anyone withdraw at the very moment we want it to stay longer and go deeper?' asked a chelik at Kabonga, and at Markabera the comment was, 'After you have entered with so much trouble, how can you leave before your work is over?' Even at Binjhli the girls said that they disliked it and tried to prevent the boys' doing it except immediately after menstruation.[2]

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Certain supposedly contraceptive herbs are taken orally. In Siuni the Muria Gaita prescribed as follows:

'Get an anagondri [the white garlic tied to the tall festal poles used by the Rawat at a Marhai bazaar]; let it dry; powder it and give it to a girl at her first menstruation in a little tobacco. This will keep her infertile for several years.'

Another remedy comes from Kuntpadar. The creeper called *keksa* is carefully watched until one is found which gives flowers but no fruit. The chelik goes to this 'barren creeper' on a Saturday and offers a little rice and *urad* pulse to it saying, 'I give you this: now come to help me'. The next day, early in the morning before cock-crow, he sacrifices a black chicken and coconut to the creeper. He sprinkles some of the blood over it and lets a little fall on the kernel of the coconut, a small bit of which he burns.

Now comes a delicate and difficult moment. He must uproot the creeper with a single jerk. If he is hesitant and fumbles with it, the root may turn into a snake and bite him. But if all is well, he takes the root home and waits until his girl's post-catamenial bath falls on a Sunday. On this day she must fast till evening when she is given a bit of the root mixed with the coconut and rice. After this, she will not conceive, just as the creeper, though it gave flowers (menstruation), bore no fruit. It is important, however, to

[1] The Gadaba of Orissa also believe that occasional intercourse in the dormitory cannot lead to conception; 'the field must be tilled for a long time before it can bear a crop'.

[2] It is curious that *coitus interruptus* is not practised more commonly by primitive people. The Baiga take the same attitude as the Muria: 'the sowing of the seed is the happiest moment in one's life'—how should one resist it?—*The Baiga*, p. 221. But the Tikopia practise it freely.—R. Firth, *We, the Tikopia* (London, 1936), pp. 490f. It has also been recorded for the Thonga (Junod, *Life of a South African Tribe*, Vol. I, p. 55), the Masai and generally in Africa (Himes, op. cit., pp. 5ff.). Himes quotes Margaret Mead for its existence among the Samoans (ibid., p. 23).

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THE PROBLEM OF GHOTUL INFERTILITY

see that the root of the creeper has no side-shoots, for these impair its efficacy.

Another orally administered drug is supposed to confer permanent sterilization.

'On a Sunday pick a few pieces of a parasite growing on a tilai tree. Dry them and heat in the fire till they can be powdered easily. Make into small pills with gur and give them to the woman—without her knowing—to eat with parched rice.' This is sometimes given by a chelik to his motiari. 'When there is great love between a boy and girl, he gives it to her so that they can love one another without danger.'

I do not know how commonly these remedies are used, but there is no doubt that chelik and motiari are expected to avoid conception somehow. A pregnancy is regarded as a gross piece of carelessness. There is a general belief that no one need conceive unless they want to, that a definite psychological factor is involved. If a boy and girl do not give themselves to one another with too oblivious a passion, if they hold back a little, if they are careful not to love too constantly or too long, conception need never follow. We have seen that too much love is not approved in the ghotul: conception is the punishment of an over-passionate attachment.

But when all precautions fail, and a girl finds herself pregnant, what happens? Directly she finds that 'the moon has come again, but the stream of blood is dry', she tells her chelik. There is no difficulty in the old type of ghotul; her ghotul-husband will look after her. In the newer type, where during the course of the month the girl may have been sleeping with a dozen different boys, she chooses either the one she likes best or the one with whom she first had congress after her last period. His immediate duty is to bring abortifacients.

Abortions are probably fairly common. In one village I was told that they mixed gur, ashes and the strongest mahua spirit available and gave it to the girl to drink. In another place the Muria said that they used gunpowder [1] mixed with mahua spirit. In Kokori, the Gaita recommended the obviously magical remedy of taking a bit of bark from a mahua tree which had been struck by lightning. This was burnt and the ashes mixed with liquor. In Berma, an eighty-year-old Muria recalled how when he was Nengi of the ghotul he made the Niross pregnant. He first dosed her with *keksa* root, but without success, apparently because he did not know the correct ritual of obtaining it, and then on a Monday he bought a bottle of *phuli* liquor. 'On that day we both fasted and in the evening, after bathing, I offered an egg and some liquor to Lingo Pen saying, "O Mahapurub Lingo, if you are a true god, let this girl abort: if you don't, the sin is yours and not mine. You founded the ghotul and if you truly live there till this day, show proof of it and I will offer you another egg". I then made the girl drink the rest of the liquor and in her drunkenness she aborted. As I had promised I gave the second egg to Lingo Pen.'

In one ghotul, about which I believe I have entirely authentic information, six of the girls had procured abortions; one had achieved it three times, twice in the third month and once in the fourth; another girl had achieved it twice. But the motiari do not like using abortifacients, for they believe that they lead to sterility later on, and this ghotul was probably exceptional. There

[1] Himes (op. cit., p. 8) quotes an unpublished report by W. B. Cline that 'it is the custom among the natives of the Oasis of Siwa in the Lybian Desert to drink infusions of gunpowder' as a contraceptive measure.